BRUNEI DARUSSALAM
2021

Chairman's Statement on the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting

24 April 2021

ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia

1. The ASEAN Leaders' Meeting was convened on 24 April 2021 at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia, and chaired by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam. The Meeting was convened with the view to advance ASEAN Community building, hasten recovery from the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, strengthen ASEAN's external relations and address pressing issues of common interest to all ASEAN Member States.

2. In the pursuit to strengthen our regional solidarity and resilience, we reiterated that the political stability in ASEAN Member States is essential to achieving a peaceful, stable and prosperous ASEAN Community. We underscored the need to maintain our unity, Centrality, and relevance in the region and to collectively address common challenges. We recognised that the strength of the ASEAN Community lies in putting people at its centre and fulfilling their desire to live in a region of lasting peace, security and stability, sustained economic growth, shared prosperity, and social progress. In this regard, we reaffirmed our commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, including adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and constitutional government, respect for fundamental freedoms, and the promotion and protection of human rights.

3. We expressed our full support towards Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Chairmanship priorities and deliverables under the theme of "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper", which focuses on harnessing the caring nature of people in the region, preparing ASEAN for the future, and enabling sustainable prosperity in a resilient region. We welcomed efforts to pursue a Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD). We looked forward to the establishment of a platform to enable the peoples of ASEAN to contribute to natural disaster relief efforts in the region. We reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to upholding multilateral cooperation, anchored in international law, towards achieving peace, security, stability, and prosperity in the region and beyond. We recognised the importance of focusing on our people and in this regard, agreed to enhance cooperation with external partners individually and under the East Asia Summit (EAS) to help address mental health issues in the region. We stressed the importance of fostering a greater sense of ASEAN identity and belonging, including amongst junior officials.

4. We expressed our commitment to support the timely realisation of Brunei Darussalam's Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs) under the ASEAN Economic Community Pillar, which are divided into three strategic thrusts of Recovery, Digitalisation, and Sustainability. As we aspire towards a people-centred, people-oriented Community, we appreciated the continued efforts to further strengthen the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Pillar and its Sectoral Bodies' agendas towards ASEAN Community building, to ensure ASEAN will be more coordinated, resilient and prepared for the future. In this regard, we looked forward to the adoption of the Regional Policy Framework on Fostering Greater Understanding, Tolerance and a Sense of Regional Agendas among Peoples of ASEAN at the 38th ASEAN Summit in October 2021.

5. On the COVID-19 pandemic, we reiterated our commitment to implement the Implementation Plan of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework in a timely manner and welcomed ASEAN Sectoral Bodies' efforts to complement the Framework. We welcomed the decision to utilise the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund to procure vaccines for the people of ASEAN as soon as possible. We also welcomed the recent announcement made by Brunei Darussalam to respectively contribute USD 100,000 to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund. We encouraged the expeditious conclusion of the ASEAN Travel Corridor Arrangement Framework (ATCAF), as well as the early operationalisation of the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies. We underscored the importance of establishing the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases in a timely manner.

6. We underscored the importance of further strengthening ASEAN Centrality and unity in our engagement with ASEAN's external partners through ASEAN-led mechanisms in order to build mutual trust and confidence as well as to reinforce an open, transparent, inclusive, and rules-based regional architecture with ASEAN at the centre. In this regard, we instructed the ASEAN Foreign Ministers to hold their meetings with the People's Republic of China and the United States as soon as possible, prior to the 54th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Additionally, we looked forward to commemorating the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations as well as the 25th anniversary of ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Relations.

7. We agreed to maintain ASEAN's proactive and outward looking approach in the conduct of ASEAN's external relations based on shared interests, constructive engagements, and mutual benefits, which can contribute to ASEAN's Community-building and development cooperation efforts. We agreed with the ASEAN Secretariat's recommendation for ASEAN to accept the United Kingdom's application for Dialogue Partnership and tasked the ASEAN Foreign Ministers to undertake the appropriate process to facilitate the United Kingdom to become a Dialogue Partner by the 54th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting/Post Ministerial Conferences (54th AMM/PMC).

8. We, as an ASEAN family, had a close discussion on the recent developments in Myanmar and expressed our deep concern on the situation in the country, including reports of fatalities and escalation of violence. We acknowledged ASEAN's positive and constructive role in facilitating a peaceful solution in the interest of the people of Myanmar and their livelihoods, and therefore agreed to the "Five-Point Consensus" attached to this Chairman's Statement. We also heard calls for the release of all political prisoners including foreigners.

9. We also underscored the importance of Myanmar's continued efforts in addressing the situation in the Rakhine State, including commencing the repatriation process, in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner in accordance with its bilateral agreements with Bangladesh. In this regard, we looked forward to the resumption of repatriation of verified displaced persons as soon as possible. We reiterated our appreciation to the Secretary-General of ASEAN for his efforts in leading the implementation of the recommendations of the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA). We also looked forward to the conduct of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) and encouraged the Secretary-General of ASEAN to continue identifying possible areas that can effectively facilitate the repatriation process for displaced persons from Rakhine State. We further underscored the importance of efforts to addressing the root causes of the situation in Rakhine State.

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Five-Point Consensus

On the situation in Myanmar, the Leaders reached consensus on the following:

- First, there shall be immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar and all parties shall exercise utmost restraint.

- Second, constructive dialogue among all parties concerned shall commence to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people.

- Third, a special envoy of the ASEAN Chair shall facilitate mediation of the dialogue process, with the assistance of the Secretary-General of ASEAN.

- Fourth, ASEAN shall provide humanitarian assistance through the AHA Centre.

- Fifth, the special envoy and delegation shall visit Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned.

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